IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Previously Presented): A process for continuously preparing higher (meth)acrylic esters (C) in a plant comprising a reaction apparatus and a vacuum evaporation stage for receiving a bottom product remaining after separation of a highly pure ester product, the process comprising:

transesterifying methyl(meth)acrylate (A) with a higher alcohol (B) in the presence of a catalyst or catalyst mixture in the reaction apparatus;

dividing a bottom effluent from the vacuum evaporation stage into a first portion and a second portion; and

recycling the first portion to the reaction apparatus;

wherein dividing the bottom effluent from the vacuum evaporation stage comprises selecting a proportion of the bottom effluent that will constitute the first portion based on current catalyst activity.

Claim 2 (Previously Presented): A process for continuously preparing higher (meth)acrylic esters (C) in a plant comprising a reaction apparatus and a film evaporator for separating a highly pure ester product, the process comprising:

transesterifying methyl(meth)acrylate (A) with a higher alcohol (B) in the presence of a catalyst or catalyst mixture in the reaction apparatus;

dividing a bottom effluent from the film evaporator into a first portion and a second portion; and

recycling the first portion to the reaction apparatus;

wherein dividing the bottom effluent from the film evaporator comprises selecting a proportion of the bottom effluent that will constitute the first portion based on current catalyst activity.

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): A process for continuously preparing higher (meth)acrylic esters (C) in a plant comprising a reaction apparatus, a film evaporator for separating a highly pure ester product, and a vacuum evaporation stage for receiving a bottom product remaining after separation of a highly pure ester product, the process comprising:

transesterifying methyl(meth)acrylate (A) with a higher alcohol (B) in the presence of a catalyst or catalyst mixture in the reaction apparatus;

dividing a bottom effluent from the film evaporator into a first portion and a second portion;

recycling the first portion to the reaction apparatus;

dividing a bottom effluent of the vacuum evaporation stage into a third portion and a fourth portion; and

recycling the third portion to the reaction apparatus;

wherein:

dividing the bottom effluent from the film evaporator comprises selecting a proportion of the bottom effluent from the film evaporator that will constitute the first portion based on current catalyst activity; and

dividing the bottom effluent from the vacuum evaporation stage comprises selecting a proportion of the bottom effluent from the vacuum evaporation stage that will constitute the third portion based on current catalyst activity.

Claim 4 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the higher alcohol comprises at least one member selected from the group consisting of n-butanol, isobutanol, and 2-ethylhexanol.

Claim 5 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the catalyst used comprises a homogeneous catalyst.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 5, wherein the catalyst comprises a titanate of the higher alcohol (B).

Claim 7 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 1, wherein the first portion comprises 1-95% by weight of the bottom effluent from the vacuum evaporation stage.

Claim 8 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 7, wherein the first portion comprises 40-90% by weight of the bottom effluent from the vacuum evaporation stage.

Claim 9 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 8, wherein the first portion comprises 60-85% by weight of the bottom effluent from the vacuum evaporation stage.

Claim 10 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 2, wherein the first portion comprises 1-95% by weight of the bottom effluent from the film evaporator.

Claim 11 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 10, wherein the first portion comprises 40-90% by weight of the bottom effluent from the film evaporator.

Claim 12 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 11, wherein the first portion comprises 60-85% by weight of the bottom effluent from the film evaporator.

Claim 13 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 3, wherein the first portion and the third portion together comprise 1-95% by weight of the bottom effluents from the film evaporator and the vacuum evaporation stage.

Claim 14 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 13, wherein the first portion and the third portion together comprise 40-90% by weight of the bottom effluents from the film evaporator and the vacuum evaporation stage.

Claim 15 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 14, wherein the first portion and the second portion together comprises 60-85% by weight of the bottom effluents from the film evaporator and the vacuum evaporation stage.

Claim 16 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 2, wherein the higher alcohol comprises at least one member selected from the group consisting of n-butanol, isobutanol, and 2-ethylhexanol.

Claim 17 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 3, wherein the higher alcohol comprises at least one member selected from the group consisting of n-butanol, isobutanol, and 2-ethylhexanol.

Claim 18 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 2, wherein the catalyst comprises a homogeneous catalyst.

Claim 19 (Previously Presented): The process of claim 3, wherein the catalyst comprises a homogeneous catalyst.

Claim 20 (Previously Presented): A process for continuously preparing higher (meth)acrylic esters (C) in a plant comprising a reaction apparatus and a vacuum evaporation stage for receiving a bottom product remaining after separation of a highly pure ester product, the process comprising:

transesterifying methyl(meth)acrylate (A) with a higher alcohol (B) in the presence of a catalyst or catalyst mixture in the reaction apparatus;

dividing a bottom effluent from the vacuum evaporation stage into a first portion and a second portion; and

recycling the first portion to the reaction apparatus;

wherein the first portion is recycled directly to the reaction apparatus.

Claims 21-22 (Cancelled).